

UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT
NORTHERN DISTRICT OF OHIO
EASTERN DIVISION

JAMAL B. FITCH,)	CASE NO. 1:10 CV 1517
)	
Plaintiff,)	
)	JUDGE SOLOMON OLIVER, JR.
v.)	
)	<u>MEMORANDUM OF OPINION</u>
JEFFREY FRINZL, <i>et al.</i> ,)	<u>AND ORDER</u>
)	
Defendants.)	

Pro se plaintiff Jamal B. Fitch filed this action under 42 U.S.C. § 1983 against Cleveland Police Officer Jeffrey Frinzl and Cleveland Jail Corrections Officer Deborah Turner. In the Complaint, Mr. Fitch alleges he was arrested and placed into an adult holding cell when he was a juvenile. He seeks monetary damages.

Background

Mr. Fitch was arrested on September 2, 2009 in the City of Cleveland and charged with felonious assault in connection with a shooting that occurred near the office of Mr. Fitch's Probation Officer. On the date of his arrest, Mr. Fitch was 17 years old. He was taken to the Cleveland City Jail where he was processed into the facility. He was first placed in a holding cell with adults and then moved to a jail cell with an adult. Although Mr. Fitch was only held in the cell for ten minutes and was not threatened or physically harmed, he feared for his safety because he was

in an adult facility. He states his booking information originally listed him as an adult, but was altered at some point to reflect that he was a juvenile.

Analysis

Although *pro se* pleadings are liberally construed, *Boag v. MacDougall*, 454 U.S. 364, 365 (1982) (per curiam); *Haines v. Kerner*, 404 U.S. 519, 520 (1972), the district court is required to dismiss an *in forma pauperis* action under 28 U.S.C. §1915(e) if it fails to state a claim upon which relief can be granted, or if it lacks an arguable basis in law or fact.¹ *Neitzke v. Williams*, 490 U.S. 319 (1989); *Lawler v. Marshall*, 898 F.2d 1196 (6th Cir. 1990); *Sistrunk v. City of Strongsville*, 99 F.3d 194, 197 (6th Cir. 1996). For the reasons stated below, this action is dismissed pursuant to §1915(e).

As an initial matter, Mr. Fitch fails to identify any particular constitutional right he believes to have been violated by the defendants. He provides a short narrative of facts, indicates he feared for his safety for a brief period of time and then requests damages in the amount of \$300,000.00. Based on his safety concerns, it is possible Mr. Fitch is asserting a claim to challenge the conditions of his confinement.

Prison officials may not deprive inmates of "the minimal civilized measure of life's necessities." *Rhodes v. Chapman*, 452 U.S. 337, 347 (1981). Although the Eighth Amendment's protections apply specifically to post-conviction inmates, *see Barber v. City of Salem, Ohio*, 953

¹ An *in forma pauperis* claim may be dismissed *sua sponte*, without prior notice to the plaintiff and without service of process on the defendant, if the Court explicitly states that it is invoking section 1915(e) [formerly 28 U.S.C. § 1915(d)] and is dismissing the claim for one of the reasons set forth in the statute. *McGore v. Wrigglesworth*, 114 F.3d 601, 608-09 (6th Cir. 1997); *Spruytte v. Walters*, 753 F.2d 498, 500 (6th Cir. 1985), *cert. denied*, 474 U.S. 1054 (1986); *Harris v. Johnson*, 784 F.2d 222, 224 (6th Cir. 1986); *Brooks v. Seiter*, 779 F.2d 1177, 1179 (6th Cir. 1985).

F.2d 232, 235 (6th Cir.1992), the Due Process Clause of the Fourteenth Amendment operates to guarantee those same protections to pretrial detainees as well. *Thompson v. County of Medina, Ohio*, 29 F.3d 238, 242 (6th Cir.1994); *see also Molton v. City of Cleveland*, 839 F.2d 240, 243 (6th Cir.1988) (stating that alleged violation of pretrial detainee's Eighth and Fourteenth Amendment rights is governed by the "deliberate indifference" standard).

The Supreme Court in *Wilson v. Seiter*, 501 U.S. 294, 298 (1991), set forth a framework for courts to use when deciding whether certain conditions of confinement constitute cruel and unusual punishment prohibited by the Eighth Amendment. A plaintiff must first plead facts which, if true, establish that a sufficiently serious deprivation has occurred. *Id.* Seriousness is measured in response to "contemporary standards of decency." *Hudson v. McMillian*, 503 U.S. 1,8 (1992). Routine discomforts of prison life do not suffice. *Id.* Only deliberate indifference to serious medical needs or extreme deprivations regarding the conditions of confinement will implicate the protections of the Eighth Amendment. *Id.* at 9. Plaintiff must also establish a subjective element showing the prison officials acted with a sufficiently culpable state of mind. *Id.* Deliberate indifference is characterized by obduracy or wantonness, not inadvertence or good faith error. *Whitley v. Albers*, 475 U.S. 312, 319 (1986). Liability cannot be predicated solely on negligence. *Id.* A prison official violates the Eighth Amendment only when both the objective and subjective requirements are met. *Farmer v. Brennan*, 511 U.S. 825, 834 (1994).

Mr. Fitch fails to establish the objective component of his claim. He was 17 years old when he was arrested and taken to the Cleveland City jail for booking. He was placed in a holding cell with an adult detainee for 10 minutes. There is no indication that he was threatened or physically injured during this time. While Mr. Fitch was apprehensive about his temporary

placement in an adult facility, this allegation, alone, does not suggest he was subjected to extreme conditions of confinement which trigger Eighth Amendment protections.

To the extent Mr. Fitch intended to assert some other type of cause of action, he failed to state a claim upon which relief may be granted. Principles requiring generous construction of *pro se* pleadings are not without limits. *See Wells v. Brown*, 891 F.2d 591, 594 (6th Cir. 1989); *Beaudett v. City of Hampton*, 775 F.2d 1274, 1277 (4th Cir. 1985). A complaint must contain either direct or inferential allegations respecting all the material elements of some viable legal theory to satisfy federal notice pleading requirements. *See Schied v. Fanny Farmer Candy Shops, Inc.*, 859 F.2d 434, 437 (6th Cir. 1988). District courts are not required to conjure up questions never squarely presented to them. *Beaudett*, 775 F.2d at 1278. To do so would “require ...[the courts] to explore exhaustively all potential claims of a *pro se* plaintiff, ... [and] would...transform the district court from its legitimate advisory role to the improper role of an advocate seeking out the strongest arguments and most successful strategies for a party.” *Id.* at 1278. Moreover, plaintiff’s failure to identify a particular legal theory in his complaint places an unfair burden on the defendants to speculate on the potential claims that plaintiff may be raising against them and the defenses they might assert in response to each of these possible causes of action. *See Wells v. Brown*, 891 F.2d at 594. Even liberally construed, the complaint does not sufficiently state the federal constitutional claim or claims upon which plaintiff intends to base his § 1983 action.

Conclusion

Accordingly, this action is dismissed pursuant to 28 U.S.C. §1915(e). The Court certifies, pursuant to 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(3), that an appeal from this decision could not be taken

in good faith.²

IT IS SO ORDERED.

/s/SOLOMON OLIVER
CHIEF JUDGE
UNITED STATES DISTRICT COURT

October 29, 2010

² 28 U.S.C. § 1915(a)(3) provides:

An appeal may not be taken *in forma pauperis* if the trial Court certifies that it is not taken in good faith.